

Text: Genesis 2:18-24

Title: "From Dreams and Desires to ..."

Introduction: Welcome to "Marriage Ship"! We have been talking about relationships for the past few weeks and how God desires for each of us to be in a relationship with God and with each other on so many levels.

For those of you who are not married, this is a great series to sit in on. The Marrieds in this room are going to have homework and they are going to hear that they need to make some adjustments ... back up and undo some things they do and try again. You get to sit here and just feel sorry for the Marrieds and maybe learn something BEFORE you get into a marriage that will save you a lot of time and pain...

I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will see our Scripture for today and on the other you will see an outline of how we are going to get started talking about marriages. Please fill in the blanks here and jot down whatever other notes you need. Then, take this piece of paper home and look at it again at least once this week to be reminded of what we've heard. For those of you who are IPODing or listening on line, please download the program so that you can fill in the blanks as well.

Last week we talked about singleness and dating and courtship, so if you missed that, jump on our website and listen to that. But, this week, we are starting the section of our series on marriage. We are going to spend three weeks on marriage. Why? Because I believe that God ordained marriage to be something great for God's kids (that's us) and the vehicle for God to use to grow up stronger followers of Jesus Christ as the couple learns to love each other and love their kids, etc.; BUT, instead, in our culture, at least half of all marriages ends in divorce and bitterness and hatred and children's lives being flipped upside-down and ... and I'm not sure that's what God had in mind. So, let's listen to our Scripture for today and pray.

**READ GENESIS 2:18-24 AND PRAY NOW!**

So, we are going to talk about the institution of marriage. Now, some of you heard that we were going to be talking about marriage starting this week and maybe you said something about it to your spouse. Chances are that the one talking about it was the wife ... She maybe said, "Hey, they are going to have a couple weeks about marriage down at BMZ ... we should go!" Husband's response: "Why don't you go and take notes."

Women hear me on this one; men think of marriage kind of like you think about a car. When you say that you want to talk about your marriage or your relationship and think that you need to spend some "TIME" together talking about how things are and where you want them to go in your relationship ... it's kind of like telling most women the details of what it's going to take to get the car fixed ...

Do you know what my wife's response is going to be most of the time? "Just get it done, Stan. I need to get back to what I'm doing."

Do you know why? She doesn't want to hear about WHAT is not working and WHY; she just wants to get in her car, turn the key and hit the gas. She wants it to work. She doesn't want to have to understand why it works or how it works or what it will take to fix it. Just fix it so I can drive it.

That's the way men are about their marriages. I don't really want to know why it's not working or what needs to be fixed ... I just want it to work! Unfortunately, too many men drive until it doesn't work and, instead of trying to fix it, they trade it in for a new one. BUT, Men, the women are right on this one ... when it comes to our marriage we need to talk about it to get it right...

*Here we go...* Most of us came into our marriages with some sort of dreams or desires for how we thought the marriage might go. And that's okay. We are supposed to. We see how our parents or family members work and we start to assume that's how a marriage should be or we see things on TV and in movies and they set a standard for what marriage and the roles of the husband and wife might be like.

So, when we get to our wedding day, we approach that day and that marriage hauling with us our box of desires and wishes and dreams about marriage. We dream that some day in our marriage we will live in a large house (picture). We dream that we will some day drive one of these (picture) ... what I'm driving right now is fine, but someday... We have preconceived notions about what our families will look like. I want to have so many kids and within 5 years of our wedding, etc. We have a picture of what our finances will look like and our job schedule will look like.

We dream about our schedule. "We will spend all of our time together." "We will spend some time together and then have our own time with our friends." "We will merge our friends." "We will never let our friends meet."

We dream about the family schedule ... "We will all be home every night by a certain time and always have supper together, and Christmas will be at my Mom's house like it's always been, etc."

Men, we had DWDs that our wives would never wear THAT to bed. Women, your DWDs are that "My husband will want me to be comfortable and will just love me and show affection no matter what."

Now, please hear me when I say, there is nothing wrong with having DWDs. We are supposed to have them. When we are dating and engaged and first married, we don't really know any better than to have our dreams about what our marriage might look like. BUT, here is the problem: They have one thing in common -- Each person comes to marriage with "MY DWDs". When two people come into a relationship with their own DWDs; that's TWO SETS of DWDs ... and they don't always match, do they!?

Bride has her "My/I" list. The groom has his "My/I" list. That's going to be a problem... Here's what happens...

### **I. Dreams/Wishes/Desires to Expectations**

- A. I'm not sure exactly what time it happens for couples. I'm sure it's a little different with each couple, but at one point or another, without really knowing why, those dreams and wishes go from legitimate dreams and wishes to EXPECTATIONS.
- B. For some people they walk in the church with DWDs and by the time they are headed back out of the church they have become EXPECTATIONS!
- C. When our dreams become expectations; that is really hard on the marriage. When this happens, the dynamic in the marriage is INSTANTLY CHANGED!

1. When we are trying to achieve or reach the other person's expectations, we spend all of our energy on that.
2. We are constantly trying to live up to and reach the bar / standard.
3. For most couples, once they realize that they are being weighed down with the other person's expectations or the other person is not living up to our expectations, there are generally three different responses that we choose from:

## II. Responses

### A. Leave

1. 1<sup>st</sup> option = Leave. If I know that there is no way I can keep up with my spouse's expectations, the easiest way out is to just quit. Time to find a new car/spouse with lower expectations.
2. If the other person is not living up to my expectations, there might be a time where I say, "I've had it. This person is just not a good spouse." She just wasn't a good wife. He just wasn't a good husband.
3. So, what do we do ... we move on to another person that we dream with and wish with until we get married and then I dump my expectations on them.
4. The common denominator many times in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> marriages that feel the same as the 1<sup>st</sup> marriage ... same person with the same demands.

### B. Conqueror / Conquered

1. Now, it might take a few months or a few years, but at some point many marriages experience one spouse finally getting the upper hand.
2. There is one who has just decided, "Okay, if this is what it's going to take to make sure you are happy or our marriage works, then I will just do it." And that person spends all their time jumping through the hoops and trying to reach the bar.
3. This is where the Conqueror finally feels like it's the marriage they've always wanted. "He finally understands what it means to be a good husband." "She finally understands what it means to be a good wife."
4. As your spouse keeps spinning faster and jumping higher to meet the expectations ... "Wow! This is finally working out! She's a pretty good wife after all."
5. Here's what we need to understand. Maybe you came today just to hear this ... *It's very easy for me to be me. It's very easy for you to be you. You don't have to convince yourself in the morning to be yourself.*
6. But, it is very difficult for me to be Sarah. It's very stressful for Sarah to try to be me. So, when you've explained for the 1,000<sup>th</sup> time, "this is how a husband is supposed to be, this is

how we handle money, this is how we raise the kids, etc.”  
you think that things are great!

7. Do you know why? Being that way is effortless for you ... you are just being you. BUT, when your spouse tries do be you; it is incredibly stressful and hard.
8. It's not natural for anyone else to be you!
9. If you are the conquered, the subdued one in the marriage, you have decided to conform for whatever reason. You are the one who said, “Okay, whatever it takes to keep this marriage running and keep him or her happy, I'll just do it. At least I won't be threatened and she'll stay quiet and happy.”
10. This does not last for too long before the conquered wears out physically and emotionally. Do you know what the real problem is ... It's still about me/my/I. Whether you are the conqueror or the conquered ... still trying to take care of self!

### C. Compromise

1. Another option is to just compromise. You do your part and I'll do my part. We'll split the bills and we'll split the time and a Christmas here and a Christmas there. You want to raise the kids this way and I want that way, let's just compromise and make it work.
2. You have your space and I have my space and you have your time and I have my time, etc. Doesn't sound so bad, does it?
3. The problem with the Compromise is that it's still about ME!
4. “I will do what you've asked me to do IF you will do what I've asked you to do.” It's still about ME and what I want.
5. Do you know what a tell-tale is when it comes to the “Compromise Option”? Have you ever heard anyone say, “I want to keep working on MY Marriage.” Or “It's worth it, because I'm committed to MY Marriage.”? “I want to save MY Marriage.”
6. The focus is on the Marriage. Not once in the Bible does it ask us to be committed to our Marriage!
7. I don't want Sarah to be committed to our Marriage. I don't want to hear her say, “I'll do this for ‘the marriage’.” Do you know why? Because Sarah could go out and get another ‘The Marriage’!
8. I want Sarah to be committed to ME! I believe that God intended for me to be committed to SARAH!
9. The Compromise Option in marriage is still all about ME! It's about ME getting what I want out of the Marriage!
10. I believe that when we are in Compromise Mode, it's no longer about the other person...

### III. **Contract or Covenant**

When we are in a Compromise Mode, that's all about the marriage and doing whatever it takes to keep the marriage. That's not Covenant. It's CONTRACT.

In a Contract Marriage, guess what the first thing to go is?!? Romance and intimacy. If you are in some sort of compromise, where we split things down the middle and you do this and I'll do this; it's still about ME! I will get what I want out of this marriage no matter what it takes. There is no room for Romance there... this is just another way of managing EXPECTATIONS.

So, there might be times in your marriage that you cannot figure out why it is like it is. Maybe you've been to counseling or you've talked and planned and said you would do it differently; I think it all comes back to this aspect of marriage...

When, in my marriage, I load my desires and dreams onto Sarah and she loads her desires and dreams on me as EXPECTATIONS, we lose all the great stuff of marriage that God intended for us. Intimacy and romance are out the window.

When we live with expectations hanging over our heads, we move from a "Covenant" Relationship to a DEBT/DEBTOR relationship.

Another way of expressing an EXPECTATION is:

A. You Owe Me

1. You're the wife ... you owe me!
2. You're the husband ... you owe me!
3. Remember, you and I stood at the altar and you said ... and your Dad was on the front row ... you promised and I'M HOLDING YOU TO IT! You Owe ME!
4. Oh yeah, well you were there too and your Mom was on the front row and you said in front of your Mom and GOD that you would never and always ... and You OWE ME! I'm holding you to the promise that you made!
5. Do you know what? We could all build a great case in our marriages about why our husband or wife owes us certain stuff! They promised and that's the way it SHOULD be.
6. Back when we were dating we used to dream and he said that he would do this and I kind of married him because he said that he would ... well I did and he hasn't!
7. Are you justified in expecting some things from your spouse? Yes. But, when you demand that stuff you are still in a DEBT / DEBTOR Relationship with your Spouse!
8. You Owe Me = all the fun stuff of marriage (intimacy and romance) is gone!
9. Remember last week we talked about "Agape" Love? In a Debt / Debtor relationship there is not any room to give or receive unconditional love.

B. Up To Par

1. Let me ask you this ... if your expectation is here and your spouse meets that expectation, how much credit do they get?
2. When meet expectations, the attitude is that is what a wife or husband is supposed to do. Congratulations! You are now at break-even. You are at zero! You are at Par!

3. I'm not going to throw a party because Sarah did what she was supposed to do (expectation). She just did what a good wife SHOULD do! Why would I celebrate that?!?
4. You are not going to get credit ... you are just meeting your obligations as a husband or wife, right?!?
5. If everything is expected or obligated, there is no room for the giving or receiving of a gift ... and, LOVE is a GIFT! There went unconditional love...
6. Do you know what? You will never receive a personal letter from your mortgage company or the cell phone company with a gift card. "Dear Stan and Sarah, we just wanted to send you a note of thanks for making your monthly payment again this month. We have been tracking the life of your family including your four wonderful daughters: Nicole, Sally, Molly and Lily. We are so proud to be associated with you and hope that we can continue in this relationship for years to come. We have enclosed a gift card for you and your family to enjoy. If you will send us a list of your likes and dislikes, we would be happy to make next month's gift card a little more personal."
7. Right! Not happening! Why? Because you're monthly payment was part of the deal / contract! When you pay your bills you are just meeting your end of the deal! You don't get personal attention when you do what you're SUPPOSED to DO!
8. Do you know when you do get personalized letter? Miss a payment or two! You miss enough payments, you will not only get a personalized letter; you will get a phone call ... with a real person! You try to call them = phone purgatory, but miss a few payments... don't meet their expectations...
9. Does your marriage feel like that?!? You do what you are supposed to do and you hear nothing. You mess up and you will get some personalized attention ...

#### IV. Expectations Meter

- A. Two things that you can use if you are wondering if your marriage is gasping for air – "Expressions of Gratitude" and "Acts of Service".
- B. Expressions of Gratitude = See I have to decide about the things that I desire in my relationship with Sarah are going to be Desires/Wishes/Dreams or are they going to be EXPECTATIONS?
  1. How I answer will affect my response to what Sarah does.
  2. One of my quirks (and I have a list) is that I really don't like it when someone finishes the toilet paper and doesn't put a new roll on the holder...
  3. If it is an EXPECTATION, then I will just blow it off if she changes the toilet paper roll. That's what she's supposed to do!! It's part of the CONTRACT!! Why thank her?!?

4. If it is in the DWD category, I might thank her for changing the toilet paper roll and making it roll from the bottom...
  5. I might thank her for making sure I have clean clothes...
  6. I might thank her for making sure my daughters and I eat...
  7. I might thank her for taking care of all the girl's schedules while I'm out of town...
  8. If it has transferred from a DESIRE to an EXPECTATION, she will never hear about it. Those things are PAR / ZERO.
- C. Acts of Service = If I am in a DEBT/DEBTOR relationship, why would I do any Acts of Service. That is going above and beyond the EXPECTATION!
1. BUT, if we have a Covenant Relationship where I am going to love my wife no matter what she says or does or no matter how I feel, guess what? I'm going to want to serve her and make her day better no matter what!
  2. If it's a contract, there is no room for "above and beyond". There's no room for doing something extra to let her know that she is loved. There's only room for doing what we AGREED to DO!
  3. Want to know where your marriage is at? Are there any special ACTS of SERVICE going on or not!?
- V. **Don't Give Up Yet...**
- A. Here is what I'm NOT SAYING: I'm not saying that you should just give up on you DWDs. I'm not saying that you should just accept whatever comes and love life for that and never bring up what you want in your marriage again. That is NOT WHERE WE ARE GOING WITH THIS!
- B. To give up the hopes and dreams that I believe God put inside of you would be unhealthy. I don't believe that we have those wishes and dreams just to be constantly disappointed. There are legitimate, God-given desires that we cannot ignore:
1. Respect
  2. To be Cherished
  3. To feel accepted
  4. Companionship
  5. Intimacy and UPI ... God designed us that way!
  6. Love
  7. The Desire to be Understood and appreciated and desired!
  8. The desire to be taken care of and listened to... of God!!
  9. BUT, if we hold these over our spouses as EXPECTATIONS, we are still going to have a problem!
- C. SO, over the next couple of times we are together, we have to discover how to move these EXPECTATIONS back over to DWDs. In order to do that, we have to discover what our EXPECTATIONS are!
- D. Marrieds (singles, you are off the hook right now!), here is your homework: take a piece of paper and write down "My Spouse Owes

Me...” and fill that in. What all does your spouse owe you? What do you feel they have promised and what have they said and what have you seen in the past to make you feel like they owe you something.

- E. Make a list of things that you feel your spouse OWES YOU! Then, talk about it. Explain to your spouse WHY you feel that way. Where did that EXPECTATION come from?!?
- F. Once we have those EXPECTATIONS, we can figure out how to move them back over to DWDs...

Let's Pray!